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AD - D. I. T

USE OF THE PERSONAL
INTERVIEW IN CITY PLANNING

A THESIS

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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this thesis is to evaluate the potential contribution of the personal interview to city planning programs, primarily as a technique of obtaining information but also as a method of disseminating information and stimulating citizen interest and support.

The major conclusions are that: (1) the personal interview is a valuable technique for a planning agency to use in obtaining information on the social conditions, attitudes, needs and wants of urban residents; (2) there are three basic types of personal interviews which can be used in obtaining this information--the poll interview, the open-end interview and the depth interview; (3) each type of interview has its strengths, weaknesses, and specialized uses, and requires particular interviewing techniques and interviewer skills; (4) the personal interview can also be of value as a technique for disseminating information to urban residents about a planning program; and (5) the personal interview can be used to stimulate interest and support for a planning program.

These conclusions were reached after a survey of pertinent literature and discussions with informed people practicing in the field of city planning. The material that was gathered in the literature survey and the discussions was supplemented by the interviewing experience of the author.

A guide to the use of personal interviews by planning agencies is presented.

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

In recent years, city planners have become increasingly aware of three serious needs within the field of city planning: (1) the need to improve the planner's knowledge of urban residents; (2) the need to inform citizens about planning programs; and (3) the need to stimulate citizen interest and support.

The Need to Improve the Planner's Knowledge of Urban Residents

First, there is growing recognition of the need to improve the planner's knowledge of the social and economic conditions, attitudes, needs and wants of urban residents. Urban life is a complex phenomenon; physical data alone are not sufficient as a basis for sound plans and policies. Moreover, in a democracy, city planners are fundamentally committed to a thorough understanding of the desires and aspirations of the city's citizens.

This need has been clearly recognized in slum clearance and redevelopment, an activity which vitally affects every aspect of the social existence of the people involved. The program has been beset with problems, particularly in the relocation of displaced families. Problems have also resulted from destruction of worthwhile social relationships in clearance areas. Planners are recognizing now the need to obtain more information about the people who are affected by urban renewal: what they are like (including their educational levels, occupations, income,

ability to obtain financial loans, and their ability to cope with the problems which urban renewal creates); how they feel toward their neighborhoods (including their desires to stay or leave); and whether they are deep-seated community values in danger of being destroyed by urban renewal procedures. (1)

The Need to Inform Citizens about Planning Programs

A second need of increasing importance is that of informing citizens of the objectives and goals of planning programs. Frequently they are not clearly understood even by the people most directly affected by the program. This is the case in urban renewal, which affects lower income groups primarily. Many of these people are difficult to reach by mass media communication methods and, thus, receive little information about the program. The result is needless fear and hostility. Unless those engaged in urban renewal planning find better means to inform the people affected, fear and hostility will continue to be deterrents to success. (2)

The Need to Stimulate Citizen Interest and Support

City planners are becoming increasingly aware of the need to stimulate interest and support for planning programs among the citizens of the community. The long range success of the programs is dependent upon this factor. However, little has been done toward developing techniques which the planning agency can use to effectively interest the citizens and to successfully encourage their support for planning programs. The result is often a "communication gap" between the official planning agency and the community.

Purpose and Methodology of Thesis

The satisfaction of each of these three needs depends upon effective communication between the citizens of the community and the city planning agency. This thesis is concerned with a technique which can be used for that communication--the personal interview. The purpose of this thesis is to evaluate the potential contribution to be made by the personal interview to the city planning program.

Three major types of personal interviews are examined from the standpoint of their usefulness to the planning agency. They are: (1) the poll interview, a highly structured interview (in terms of the verbal structuring of the interview) in which both the questions and response categories are predetermined; (2) the open-end interview, a medium structured interview in which the questions are predetermined but the responses are left open; and (3) the depth interview, a non-structured interview in which neither specific questions nor probable responses are predetermined.

The subject was investigated through a survey of pertinent literature and discussions with informed people practicing in the field of city planning. The material that was gathered in the literature survey and the discussions was supplemented by the interviewing experience of the author.

Nature of the Personal Interview

The personal interview is a specialized technique of direct communication used to investigate a specific subject. It is similar to an ordinary conversation in that the participants are in face-to-face

contact and are continually communicating with each other--verbally and by means of gestures and facial expressions. This face-to-face contact between the participants distinguishes the personal interview from other interviewing techniques. (3)

Since the personal interview is used to investigate a specific subject, that subject forms the context within which the interview is conducted. The interviewer usually confines the conversation to that topic alone, avoiding extraneous material. (To accomplish this, he uses some form of an interview schedule--a guide or format--in conducting the interview.) The interviewer utilizes his training and skills to encourage the respondents to discuss the topic so that their attitudes and behavior can be better understood.

Strengths of the Personal Interview

A major strength of the personal interview relative to other communication techniques is the face-to-face contact between the participants. This contact is the major factor which enables the interviewer to obtain virtually any type of information in the personal interview. Positive facial expressions, gestures and spoken words--all of which reflect the interviewer's desire to successfully communicate with the respondent--contribute to the establishment of rapport between them. Once the rapport has been established, almost any topic can be discussed, including emotion-laden or personal topics that are not easily handled in other types of interviews. (4)

A second valuable attribute of the personal interview is flexibility. The interview can be adapted to the respondent. For example, the language of the interview can be adjusted if the respondent is

illiterate. If he misinterprets a question, it can be rephrased. Furthermore, the personal interview allows the interviewer to "follow-up" or "probe" an answer to get a more meaningful response. (5)

Because it is more flexible in use, the personal interview usually yields more reliable information than could be obtained by other techniques. Through his ability to rephrase or explain a question, the interviewer can usually eliminate irrelevant or inaccurate information.

Weaknesses of the Personal Interview

The personal interview is, of course, not without weaknesses. An example is the cost. The personal interview frequently is a more expensive technique to use than some other available methods. An interviewing staff must be hired and transportation costs must be paid. Personal interviews are time consuming; the interviewing staff can complete only a limited number each day. These factors contribute to a relatively high cost per completed interview. (6)

Another potential weakness is the fact that the "human equation" may distort the results obtained in the interview situation. Certainly the quality of the data will depend upon the interviewer's objectivity and skills in motivating the respondent to reply freely and fully, in conveying to the respondent the idea or topic to be discussed and in recording the responses accurately and completely. If the interviewer fails to sufficiently motivate the respondent or if the interviewer does not convey a clear idea of what he wants to know, the respondent's reply may be inadequate or inaccurate. If the interviewer should bias the respondent's replies or if he should not record the replies accurately

or completely, the value of the interview is impaired. (7)

Comparison of Personal Interview with Other Communication Techniques

Two other communication techniques available to the planning agency are the telephone interview and the mailed questionnaire. Though there are situations in which they can be put to effective use, both the telephone interview and the mailed questionnaire have serious limitations which restrict their value to the planning agency.

Comparison with Telephone Interview

The telephone interview has numerous attractive features: it is the quickest of all investigative techniques and the cost per completed interview is low; refusal rates are usually low; the approach and the questions are easy to standardize; and it is easy to train interviewers for such work. In addition interviewers may be scattered over a wide area of the city without adding to the cost. (8) In these respects, then, the telephone interview has certain advantages over the personal interview.

However, the telephone interview is subject to serious limitations which do not apply to the personal interview. First, large portions of the urban population cannot be reached by a telephone interview because many homes in cities have no telephones. (9) This could be a particularly serious problem if the respondents were slum residents, many of whom have no telephones. However, virtually all of these people could be reached through personal interviews.

Furthermore, the information that can be obtained by the telephone interview is limited. Detailed information is difficult to obtain because the respondent may become annoyed at giving such data in a tele-

phone call. Information of a personal nature, such as the respondent's age, race, nationality, income level, or personal background, is difficult to get because sufficient rapport is rarely established over the telephone. For the same reason, it is frequently impossible to obtain attitudes and opinions in a telephone interview. These limitations do not apply in the same degree to the personal interview.

Comparison with the Mailed Questionnaire

The mailed questionnaire too has several attractive features. It is a fairly inexpensive technique. Since it is mailed to the respondents, it is self-administering: there is no problem of hiring and training interviewers. Since there is no interviewer present, the mailed questionnaire places little pressure on the respondent for an immediate reply. (10)

There are also serious limitations on the use of the mailed questionnaire. First, there is the basic problem of motivating the respondent to answer the questions and return the questionnaire. Only under unusual circumstances will a large percentage of the respondents do so.

A second problem is that the mailed questionnaire cannot be used to communicate with the sizeable portion of urban populations who can neither read nor write. (Approximately 10 per cent of the population of the United States is illiterate and would be unable to respond to a mailed questionnaire.) Furthermore, the number of people who would be incapable of responding meaningfully would increase in direct proportion to the complexity of the questionnaire. (11)

Also, there is a limitation on the types of information which can be obtained by the mailed questionnaire. This technique is unsuitable for much information that is personal. Few people would be willing to write this sort of information on a questionnaire and send it to what they consider to be a strange, impersonal organization.

These limitations may be overcome by using personal interviews.

Organization of Thesis

The following chapters are devoted to a detailed discussion of the use of a personal interview by planning agencies. Chapter II is a discussion of the three basic types of personal interviews and an evaluation of their usefulness to the planning agency in obtaining information. Chapter III is a consideration of the value of the personal interview as a technique for disseminating information and stimulating citizen interest and support. Chapter IV is a guide to the use of personal interviews by the planning agency.

CHAPTER II

OBTAINING INFORMATION THROUGH PERSONAL INTERVIEWS

For the city planning agency, the primary value of the personal interview is as a technique for obtaining information about urban residents. This information could vary from simple socio-economic characteristics to opinions and deep-seated beliefs--all of which can be vital to the success of the planning process.

There are three basic types of personal interviews which can be used: the poll interview; the open-end interview; and the depth interview. The usefulness of each type to the planning agency in obtaining information is discussed in this chapter.

In spite of similarities, there are fundamental differences among the three types of personal interviews. For example, there are differences in use, pertaining both to the information which can best be obtained and to the different conditions under which one type is more appropriate than the others. Personal interviews also differ in the degree of standardization or "structuring" that is designed into them. Also, there are differences in the methods used in conducting them, the interviewer skills required and the cost per completed interview. (12)

In this chapter the poll interview, the open-end interview and the depth interview are presented as "pure types." In actual practice, the personal interview may be a combination of the three, with intermixing of structured and non-structured questions throughout the inter-

view. However, by discussing the interviews as "pure types," it is easier to isolate their advantages and disadvantages to the planning program.

The Poll Interview

The first type of personal interview to be considered is the poll interview. It is probably the most familiar to citizens and to the planning agency because it is used by the Bureau of the Census to obtain population information. Also, the poll interview is the one most frequently used by pollsters conducting commercial surveys and public opinion research.

Characteristic Features

The poll interview is characterized by standardized questions and pre-determined response categories. The questions are carefully determined prior to the interview, with regard to the precise wording and the sequence in which they will be asked. These questions then comprise the interview schedule. In addition, the range of responses which the interviewees might make to each question is established. Then response categories for each question are selected and are included on the schedule. (13)

To illustrate these characteristics, consider typical poll interview questions designed to elicit information on the number of pre-school-age children in a given household:

Are there any children living with you who are not yet
old enough to go to elementary school?

Yes _____ No _____

(If Yes) How many are there?

$\frac{\quad}{2}$
 $\frac{3}{4}$
 $\frac{\quad}{4}$
 or more $\frac{\quad}{\quad}$

The poll interview is used in situations in which substantial amounts of information about the group of respondents exist prior to the interview and when the objective of the interviews is to classify the respondents on the basis of their replies. With prior information, the precise wording of the questions and the range of possible answers can be pre-determined. Once he has established the necessary rapport, the major task remaining for the interviewer then is to ask the questions of each respondent and record his replies in the response categories.

4)

Use in Planning

There are two ways in which the poll interview can be of value to the planning agency: (1) in obtaining information on social and economic characteristics of urban residents, and (2) in obtaining statements of past and present behavior.

Obtaining Information on Social and Economic Characteristics.

The poll interview is most frequently used to obtain data on the social and economic characteristics of population groups. Information commonly secured by this method includes the ages, occupations, educational levels, income levels and family sizes.

As a technique for securing this information, the poll interview would be valuable to the planning agency in conducting "neighborhood analyses." In such programs, the planning agency often recognizes a

need for understanding the distinctive social and economic characteristics of the people in the area under study in addition to an understanding of physical conditions.

The poll interview has been used to obtain this type of information in a study of a Milwaukee neighborhood. (15) The following questions and response categories are excerpts from the interview schedule used in the study.

Address _____

Introduction: I'm from the University of Wisconsin.
We're making a study of this neighborhood.
I'd like to speak with the lady of the house or the head of the house.

... 2. How long have you lived in this house?

Less than 1 year	_____	11-15 years	_____
1-2 years	_____	16-20 years	_____
3-5 years	_____	Over 20 years	_____
6-10 years	_____		

... 7. Do you own or rent this house?

Own _____ Rent _____

... 20. (To renters) What is your monthly rent?

Under \$15.00	_____	\$40.00-44.99	_____
\$15.00-19.99	_____	45.00-49.99	_____
20.00-24.99	_____	50.00-59.99	_____
25.00-29.99	_____	60.00-69.99	_____
30.00-34.99	_____	70.00 and Over	_____
35.00-39.99	_____		

... 22. Do any children live here with you?

Yes _____ No _____

(If Yes) How many are:

Too young to go to school	_____
In grade school	_____

In high school _____
 In college _____
 Other _____

... 23. Please tell me which of these groups your weekly family income belongs in:

(Hand Card) Under \$15.00 per week _____
 \$15.00-19.99 _____
 20.00-24.99 _____
 25.00-29.99 _____
 30.00-39.99 _____
 40.00-49.99 _____
 50.00-59.99 _____
 60.00-69.99 _____
 70.00-79.99 _____
 80.00-89.99 _____
 90.00 and Over _____
 Refused _____

... 25. What was the last grade you finished in school?

Completed college _____
 Some college _____
 Completed high school _____
 Some high school _____
 Completed grammar school _____
 5-7 years grammar school _____
 4 years grammar school _____
 No formal school _____

By means of this poll interview, a variety of information on the social and economic characteristics of the residents was obtained-- information that would be necessary for a careful analysis of a neighborhood.

Obtaining Statements of Past and Present Behavior. The poll interview can also be used to obtain statements about the past and present behavior of the respondents. Only information which is familiar to the respondents and requires a simple reporting of facts is sought.

The poll interview is not used to solicit a recalling and evaluation of experience.

In the study of the neighborhood in Milwaukee, information on the past behavior of the residents was obtained by means of the following questions: (15)

Have you discussed those things you don't like with anyone else in the neighborhood?

Yes _____ No _____ Don't remember _____

Have you talked about them with your alderman or any other public official?

Yes _____ No _____ Don't remember _____

Have you ever tried to get any organization you belong to to do anything about the things you don't like?

Yes _____ No _____ Don't remember _____

Questions such as these probe past attempts by the residents to initiate action to improve their neighborhoods. If there have been only sporadic, individual attempts--or none at all--the planning agency may want to recommend concerted and coordinated action by a neighborhood organization. Such an organization may prove to be an effective tool in halting deterioration and improving the area.

Methods Employed in Conducting the Poll Interview

The poll interview is the simplest of all interviews to conduct. The interviewer reads the questions as they are written on the interview schedule and records the responses by checking the appropriate blanks beside pre-coded response categories. Although situations may arise in

which the interviewer has to rephrase a question so that the respondent will understand it, they are not common and the interviewer is not expected to engage in discussions about the meaning of a particular question. (16)

Interviewer Skills Required

Since the poll interview is relatively simple to conduct, the requirements for interviewer skills are less stringent than with other types of interviews. Aside from standard requirements of sincerity and honesty (so that the sponsoring agency can be assured that the data are reported accurately), the major requirements for a poll interviewer are a reasonable amount of pleasantness and intelligence and an ability to follow instructions. Therefore, it is not usually essential that professional interviewing personnel be employed for conducting poll interviews. (17)

Strengths of the Poll Interview

The poll interview has several strengths. First, since it is simple to administer, planning agency personnel not specifically trained in interviewing could be used to conduct the interviews.

Second, completed poll interviews are relatively easy instruments to analyze and compare. The pre-established questions and response categories allow quantitative statistical techniques to be used in analyzing the completed interview schedules. Comparison among completed schedules is simple and the results of the interview study can be expressed in percentages or in arithmetic figures. (18) Therefore, if the planning agency wanted to "classify" a group of respondents according to social characteristics, the poll interview is an appropriate choice.

The results could be expressed as percentages according to each category of characteristics, such as: 42 per cent of the 130 families in residential area A have three or more children living in the home.

Furthermore, because the poll interview is easy to administer and analyze, it is a relatively inexpensive method of gathering information. As a general rule, it is the least expensive of the personal interviews. (19)

Limitations of the Poll Interview

However, there are limitations on the use of the poll interview. For example, it is not effective in exploring respondents' attitudes and opinions. Neither is it useful in obtaining information for which the respondent must recall experience and evaluate it before answering. The poll interview is too rigid and inflexible to allow the interviewer to properly explore attitudes and opinions and it is too difficult to predict the range of experience-evaluation responses prior to an interview to pre-code them. If the poll interview is used in an attempt to explore attitudes and opinions--or to obtain evaluations of experience--either the percentage of "don't know" responses will be high or there is the danger that many of the responses will be chosen arbitrarily in an attempt to place all of the respondent's replies into pre-coded response categories. (20)

Another limitation of the poll interview is that much of the final value of the interview will be dependent upon the quality of the schedule that is constructed prior to the interview. Since the questions and probable responses are predetermined, the validity of the information obtained from the respondent depends to a large degree on the schedule.

The respondent's perspective on the topic under study is narrowed by the content and the wording of the questions and his answers must be fitted into the predetermined scheme of response categories. In formulating the interview schedule, then, care must be exercised to insure that the questions cover as many of the significant aspects of the topic as possible, and that the predetermined response categories are valid. (21)

The Open-End Interview

The second type of personal interview that could be used for obtaining information is the open-end interview, often referred to as the "free-response" interview.

Characteristic Features

As the name implies, the characteristic feature of this interview is the fact that the respondent is expected to make a "free" response to the questions: there are no predetermined response categories. The respondent's replies are recorded verbatim.

As in the poll interview, the questions are predetermined and are printed on the interview schedule. However, since the responses are left entirely open, the open-end interview can be classified as medium-structured.

As an illustration of this type of interview, consider typical open-end interview questions:

How do you like living in Atlanta? _____

What do you like most about living here? _____

What do you dislike about living here? _____

There are no unusual limitations on the type of information that can be obtained by means of the open-end interview. It is commonly used to investigate both objective facts about respondents (including socio-economic characteristics and past and present behavior) and it is also used to determine respondents' attitudes and opinions.

Use in Planning

Since there is no attempt to predict the responses that could be made to the questions, the open-end interview is valuable for investigating subjects about which there is little specific information. It is particularly useful in determining attitudes and opinions of residents regarding the city in general or specific programs underway or contemplated by the planning agency.

Determining Attitudes and Opinions. The planner's knowledge is particularly limited where urban residents' attitudes and opinions are involved. Two examples are: (1) urban residents' concepts of livability and (2) attitudes of residents toward neighborhood conservation procedures.

The subject of residents' concepts of urban livability has become of concern to the city planner in recent years. An early exploration of these concepts was made by Professor Kevin Lynch of Massachusetts Institute of Technology. (22) Professor Lynch was interested in investigating urban residents' "images" of their cities and in determining the physical elements of the cities which contributed most to those

images.

The primary method of investigation used was an open-end interview. Among the questions which were asked of residents in Boston were the following:

1. What first comes to your mind, what symbolizes the word "Boston" for you?

- 3a. Please give me complete and explicit directions for the trip that you normally take going from home to where you work . . . We are interested in the physical pictures of things. It's not important if you can't remember the names of streets and places.

- 3b. Do you have any particular emotional feelings about various parts of your trip?

How long would it take you? _____

Are there parts of the trip where you feel uncertain of the location? _____

4. Now, we would like to know what elements of Central Boston you think are the most distinctive. They may be large or small, but tell us those that are the easiest to identify and remember. _____

(23)

On the basis of the information obtained, Professor Lynch was able to derive practical suggestions regarding urban design that would be of value to people involved in city planning.

Another investigation of urban residents' concepts of livability was made in two North Carolina cities, Durham and Greensboro. (24)

The purpose of the study was to explore factors which seem to contribute to a livable city. A total of 385 residents were interviewed. Among the open-end questions which were used to explore the residents' attitudes and opinions of their cities and neighborhoods were the following:

What things do you especially like about living in (Durham or Greensboro)? _____

What things do you especially dislike about living in (Durham or Greensboro)? _____

(Asked in Greensboro) . . . If you ever daydream about the ideal kind of place to live, can you tell me where it might be? _____

(Asked in Durham) . . . If you ever daydream about the ideal kind of place to live, can you tell me what kind of place it might be? _____

What things do you especially like about living in this neighborhood? _____

(25)

The open-end interview would also be of value in carrying out a conservation program in a residential neighborhood that was threatened by blight and deterioration. It could be used, first, to investigate the residents' attitudes toward the area, particularly their attitudes toward staying or leaving. The residents' attitudes are extremely important to the success of such a program since they will be called upon

to rehabilitate their homes. Without their support, the program would be in danger of failure. (26)

Secondly, the open-end interview could be used to determine the extent of the residents' understanding of the nature of the conservation program--what it is and why it is needed in that area. In doing this, the planning agency could also determine if there is any opposition to the program. If so, the extent and the reasons for the opposition could be determined.

Methods Employed in Conducting the Open-End Interview

In conducting the open-end interview, the interviewer reads the questions as they are written on the schedule. When the respondent answers, the interviewer records the replies as fully and as accurately as possible.

In addition, during the interview, the open-end interviewer uses a technique known as "non-directive probing." A non-directive probe is a neutral statement such as "um-hm," "I see," or "Tell me more about it." (27) These statements are intended to maintain, or enhance, the rapport between the interviewer and respondent and to encourage the respondent to expand or elaborate upon a reply to a question.

The non-directive probe is a somewhat sophisticated interviewing technique and must be used properly. If the interviewer has not timed a non-directive probe properly, it will appear stilted and unnatural and it may stop a respondent from completing a thought. Furthermore, the probe statements must carry no positive or negative judgment value or there is the risk that they will bias the replies of the respon-

dent. (28)

Interviewer Skills Required

The open-end interview generally requires a higher level of interviewer skills than the poll interview. The interviewer must not only be able to record the respondents' replies accurately but he must also be able to use the non-directive probing technique effectively. He must be able to "sense" whether or not rapport has been established between the respondent and himself. Once it has been established, he must maintain it. The interviewer must be able to determine whether a particular response is fully adequate and, if not, he must encourage the respondent to comment further.

The needed skills for conducting open-end interviews are best acquired through training and experience. Under most circumstances there will be no people with the necessary training and experience on the planning agency's staff.

Strengths of the Open-End Interview

The free-response design of the open-end interview is its most valuable attribute. The respondent is offered the opportunity to state his individual opinion rather than being limited by predetermined response categories, as was the case in the poll interview. The respondent's statements are then recorded verbatim rather than being submitted to an arbitrary cataloging.

A second major attribute of the open-end interview--resulting from the free-response design--is the greater degree of flexibility in the interview, much increased over that in the poll interview. The open-end interview allows the interviewer some flexibility to probe for

additional factual statements or to probe the respondent's attitudes and opinions on a particular topic. The poll interview does not have such inherent flexibility.

In addition, there is greater opportunity in the open-end interview for the interviewer to clear up misinterpreted questions. The fact that the respondent has misinterpreted a question will quickly become apparent. The interviewer can then repeat or rephrase the question so that the respondent will clearly understand what information is being sought.

Limitations of the Open-End Interview

However, the open-end interview has limitations. They include (1) the demand for more time and cooperation from the respondents; (2) the requirements for a higher level of interviewer skills; (3) the greater cost of the interview; and finally (4) the problem of comparability among the completed interviews. (29)

Due to the free-response design and the interviewer's desire to obtain as complete answers as possible, the open-end interview frequently requires more time for completion than does the poll interview. The longer time required places more of a demand upon the respondent for his time and cooperation. Although this problem is not usually a serious one, it could be serious if the interview schedule contains a large number of questions.

A second limitation upon the open-end interview is that it requires a higher level of interviewer skills than the poll interview. The interviewer must be able to take full advantage of the free-response design. To a greater extent than in the poll interview, then,

the success of the open-end interview depends upon the skills of the interviewer.

A third limitation is the higher cost of the open-end interview; it is usually greater than that of the poll interview. As a rule, fewer open-end interviews can be completed in a given period of time than poll interviews. In addition, as noted above, the open-end interview usually requires the services of more highly skilled--and thus more highly paid--interviewers.

Another problem which places a limitation upon the use of the open-end interview is an often-encountered lack of comparability among completed open-end interviews. Due to the free-response design, the total range of responses to any given question may be quite large. This complicates the analysis of the responses; there may be such variation among the responses that it would be difficult to establish meaningful analytical categories and comparison among the completed interviews would be difficult.

The Depth Interview

The third type of interview to be considered is the depth interview, also referred to as the "focused" interview or the "non-structured" interview. It has been used by social scientists to study a variety of topics, including the psychological impact of movies and the effectiveness of propaganda techniques. (30) As an information-getting technique, the depth interview could be of significant value to the city planning agency.

Characteristic Features

In the depth interview, neither the precise questions nor the probable responses are predetermined. Instead, the interviewer formulates the questions to be asked while the interview is in progress. He then reports the respondent's replies as completely as possible, as in the open-end interview.

There are two guides which the depth interviewer uses in determining the questions he asks the respondent: (1) an outline of significant aspects of the topic; and (2) the statements made by the respondent. (31)

Before the interview takes place, the general subject under study is carefully examined and the apparent significant aspects are chosen as a general framework for the interview. This framework becomes the outline which the interviewer uses; it is the basis of most of his questions.

In addition, the depth interviewer takes "cues" for subsequent questions from the statements made by the respondent. He does not hesitate to probe or pursue a statement that does not fall within the outline which he is using. In this manner, the depth interviewer may discover an aspect of the subject that is significant to the respondent but which had been overlooked in the prior analysis of the topic.

The usefulness of the depth interview is similar to that of the open-end interview--as a research technique to investigate subjects about which there is little or no information, particularly attitudes and opinions. It is especially valuable for studying people's attitudes before and after a major event or experience. During the

interviews, the interviewer asks the respondents about their attitudes toward the experience, what they consider most important about it and the ways in which the experience has affected their lives. In this manner, the interviewer can determine:

- (1) if the aspects which appear to be the most significant actually are such to the people involved;
- (2) the range of attitudes toward the experience;
- (3) the intensity of the attitudes in terms of how strongly they feel about the experience;
- (4) changes in their attitudes and behavior due to the experience; and
- (5) the existence of a minority of individuals who did not react and who do not feel as the majority. (32)

Use in Planning

The primary value of the depth interview is as a technique for analyzing a critical event or experience which involves urban residents. One example of such an experience is slum clearance and relocation.

Analysis of an Experience: Slum Clearance and Relocation. The planning agency and the urban renewal agency alike share an interest in the psychological effects of slum clearance and relocation upon the people involved. The depth interview could be used to make an investigation of them.

Before the depth interviews were conducted with the people who were affected, an outline of the apparent significant aspects of the experience would be prepared. Such an outline would probably include:

(1) the residents' attitudes toward the choice of their area for clearance procedures; (2) the burdens imposed by the relocation process; (3) the disruption of old neighborhood ties; and (4) the psychological impact of having to start anew in establishing neighborhood and friendship ties and, in some cases, business ventures.

During the interviews, other aspects of slum clearance and relocation would emerge as significant to the respondents. These too would be explored by the depth interviewer.

Information on these aspects would be valuable to the planning agency and to the urban renewal agency in evaluating slum clearance and relocation procedures. In effect, the benefits could be weighed against the psychological "costs." Such information would also be useful in evaluating the citizens' understanding of the purposes of urban renewal and the way in which it is related to comprehensive planning for the entire city.

Analysis of an Event: The Defeat of a Needed Bond Issue. As an illustration of the depth interview's analytical value, the planning agency could use it to explore the factors underlying the defeat of a much-needed bond issue. When the improvements included in such an issue are apparently recognized as necessary by the city's leadership, the issue's defeat in a bond election is a puzzling occurrence. The planning agency and the elected officials of the municipal government would share a joint interest in the reasons for its defeat. The depth interview would be a valuable technique to use in exploring these reasons.

Significant aspects of the issue that would be investigated would probably include: (1) the extent of influence of particular individuals or groups; (2) the effect of the timing of the bond issue; (3) the extent of residents' interest in each of the improvements; and (4) the residents' understanding of the methods of financing. If other aspects were more important to the voters, they would become apparent in the course of the depth interview.

Once the factors underlying the issue's defeat were identified, it would be possible for corrective measures to be taken prior to a subsequent referendum. These might include a deletion of controversial projects from the issue; a change in the methods of financing it, such as cancellation of a proposed property tax increase; or a more highly organized educational campaign to eliminate misunderstanding and to stimulate public appreciation of the improvements.

Methods Employed in Conducting the Depth Interview

The interviewing methods employed in conducting the depth interview are more sophisticated than those used in either the poll or open-end interviews. The depth interviewer is faced with the responsibility of guiding the interview within a general framework but he does not have the benefit of predetermined questions. Furthermore, he must not limit the respondent's discussion if other aspects seem more important.

Therefore, one of the techniques used by the depth interviewer is that of leaving the initiative with the respondent throughout most of the interview. In this sense, the depth interviewer is not "conducting an interview" as much as he is "guiding the respondent's discussion of a topic." The depth interview is almost entirely

tailored to the individual respondent's conceptualization of the topic.

(33)

In leaving the initiative largely to the respondent, the depth interviewer must not, however, allow the respondent to engage in lengthy, irrelevant discussion. Therefore, the interviewer relies heavily upon the non-directive probing technique throughout the depth interview. With this technique, he can tactfully re-orient the respondent to the topic if his discussion should wander from it. Of course, the depth interviewer also depends upon the non-directive probe as an aid in maintaining rapport with the respondent and in encouraging him to discuss more fully points which the respondent has raised, as was the case in the open-end interview.

Interviewer Skills Required

Because so much of the success of the depth interview is dependent upon the interviewer himself, the depth interview requires a higher level of interviewer skills than either the poll or open-end interviews. The interviewer must determine specific questions while the interview is in progress and phrase them objectively (so that he will not impose his value judgments upon the respondent) without benefit of previous consideration.

Throughout the interview, the depth interviewer must be able to effectively motivate the respondent to take the initiative and talk freely about the subject. However, the interviewer must also be able to take the initiative from the respondent. When he "senses" the proper time to ask a question, the interviewer must regain the initiative without being abrupt; his questions should stimulate the

respondent, not stifle him. If the respondent's conversation should stray from the subject, the interviewer must guide him back tactfully and smoothly. (34)

The way in which the needed depth interviewer skills can best be acquired is through training and experience. Depth interviewing requires a sensitivity to the emotional forces which motivate people to respond and those which hinder response. The training and opportunities for experience in depth interviewing are usually offered in the social science departments of universities, notably the departments of sociology, social work, psychology and social psychology, and in medical schools which offer training in psychiatry and psychoanalysis.

Strengths of the Depth Interview

There are two major strengths of the depth interview over the other types of personal interviews. The first is flexibility. The other types of personal interviews are not designed for complete flexibility as is the depth interview; it is tailored to the individual respondent. This enables the interview to "bring out the effective and value-laden implications of the subject's responses and to determine the personal significance of his various attitudes." (35) The depth interview is successfully used when it focuses the respondent's attention upon the subject under study and solicits from him spontaneous, meaningful statements.

The second strength of the depth interview is the fact that it can be used to determine the relative intensity of attitudes. The atmosphere of the depth interview situation should be one of complete rapport between the interviewer and the respondent; the respondent is

encouraged to explain how he feels about a particular topic, in his own words. Of his own volition, he will usually state the intensity of his feelings about the topic. In those cases in which he does not, the intensity will usually be evident to the trained depth interviewer. By using the depth interview, then, it is possible to establish a rank ordering of attitudes and opinions for the respondents, from the most intense to the least intense.

Limitations of the Depth Interview

The limitations of the depth interview are similar to those of the open-end interview, but they are generally more stringent. They include: the requirement for more highly skilled interviewers; the higher expense; and a lack of comparability among completed interviews.

To a certain extent, the limitations cited above are inter-related. Because the needed skills can be attained only through intensive training and experience, fewer people will be qualified and available for use as depth interviewers. The higher level of interview skills required and the limited number of qualified people available contribute to a higher cost for the depth interview. Of the three basic types of personal interviews, the depth interview is likely to be the most expensive. (36)

Due to the high degree of inherent flexibility in the depth interview, there is little opportunity for statistical comparability among the completed interviews. The fact that each respondent may view the topic differently, together with the fact that the questions asked may differ significantly among the respondents, contribute to the individuality of each completed interview. Thus, while a successful

depth interview approach will identify the range of significant aspects of the topic under study and the relative importance of these aspects, there is no guarantee that each completed interview will be comparable with the others. (37)

Summary

There are three basic types of personal interviews available to the planning agency for obtaining information--the poll interview, the open-end interview and the depth interview. The poll interview is a highly-structured interview in which both the specific questions and the probable responses are predetermined. It could be used to obtain information on socio-economic characteristics of urban residents or to obtain statements about their past and present behavior. Poll interviews are usually simpler to conduct and could be carried out by the personnel of the planning agency. They are easy to analyze and to compare and they are relatively inexpensive.

However, poll interviews are not appropriately used in studying attitudes and opinions. Also, their value is greatly dependent upon the quality of the predetermined interview schedule. This schedule must be carefully prepared if the results of the poll interviews are to be valid.

In the open-end interview, the questions are predetermined, but the responses are left "open" to the respondent. The open-end interview is valuable for investigating subjects about which there is little or no information. Generally there is no limitation on the type of information which can be obtained. The open-end interview is more

difficult to conduct than the poll interview because the free-response design imparts a large degree of flexibility to the interview. Also, due to the free-response design, the open-end interview generally demands more time and cooperation from the respondent and requires a higher level of interviewer skills. It is more expensive to use than the poll interview and there is a problem of comparability among completed open-end interviews because the total range of responses to any given question may be large.

The depth interview is one in which neither the precise questions nor the alternative responses are determined prior to the interview. Instead, the interviewer chooses the important aspects of the topic and uses them as a general guide; specific questions are determined during the interview. The depth interview can be used as a research technique to investigate a variety of fields of inquiry, but it is especially valuable for analyzing individuals' behavior patterns before and after an event or experience, such as slum clearance and relocation.

The depth interview requires a high level of interviewer skills. The interviewer must be able to carefully phrase questions during the interview without benefit of prior consideration and he must be able to guide the interview tactfully and smoothly without reducing the respondent's motivation or imposing his value judgments upon the respondent. Throughout the interview, he depends heavily upon the non-directive probe.

The depth interview's primary attribute is flexibility, which allows the interviewer to draw out the respondent upon the topic being investigated. However, this flexibility results in a lack of compara-

bility among completed depth interviews. Due to the requirement of a high level of interviewer skills, it is a fairly expensive investigative technique.

CHAPTER III

DISSEMINATING INFORMATION AND STIMULATING CITIZEN INTEREST AND SUPPORT THROUGH PERSONAL INTERVIEWS

The need to better inform citizens about the planning program and to stimulate their interest and support is increasingly recognized. Much of the success of the planning agency's operation depends upon its ability to communicate the purposes, goals and procedures of planning to the people in the community. Through the efforts of a knowledgeable and active citizenry plans can be implemented.

The personal interview is a two-way flow of communication between respondent and interviewer. Thus, although it is most commonly used to secure information from people, it can also be used to give information to them and to stimulate their interest. (38) The personal interview could be, therefore, a valuable technique for the planning agency to use for these purposes.

Disseminating Information Through Personal Interviews

The personal interview is a particularly valuable technique for disseminating information. The face-to-face contact of the interview situation insures that the respondent's attention will be focused upon the material to be presented. It also enables the interviewer to transmit almost any type of information to the respondents. As stated earlier, the flexibility of the interview situation allows the interviewer to adapt the information to the particular education or compre-

hension level of the respondent. It also permits re-stating or re-phrasing the information so that all the respondents will clearly understand it.

There are three basic types of planning information which can be given to a city's residents by means of personal interviews:

- (1) the goals and objectives of the planning study or program;
- (2) the role of the respondents as a source of information or as active participants in a program formulated by the planning agency; and
- (3) additional, special information which the planning agency considers important.

Goals and Objectives of the Planning Study

Since the interviews would normally be undertaken as a part of a planning study, the study itself would form the framework for the interviews. It would be essential for the respondents to realize the importance of the study before they could be expected to offer their whole-hearted cooperation and participation. Therefore, the first type of information to be given to them would be the planning study's goals and objectives. This information would not only include a statement of what was to be accomplished, but also the reasons it was important to accomplish these objectives. For example, if the planning agency were undertaking a study for a conservation program in a residential area, the interviewers would not only explain the nature of the program but they would also explain why it was necessary to implement it to fight impending deterioration.

Anticipated Role of the Respondents

A second type of information which could be transmitted is the anticipated role of the respondents with respect to the planning study or program. If they have been chosen solely as a source of information for the planning study, this fact would be given to them. On the other hand, if the planning agency wants the respondents to become active participants in a program which will either accompany or follow the study, the personal interview is an appropriate way to inform them.

Special Information

Finally, "special information" could be transmitted to the respondents. A variety of information could be included in this category. For example, the interviewers could explain the procedures that will be used in carrying out the program and the timing of these procedures. They could also answer any particular questions that have been bothering the respondents about the program, such as where they should go for additional information and assistance.

Stimulating Citizen Interest and Support

Citizen interest and support for planning programs depend to a great extent upon the degree to which residents of the city understand the reasons for the programs, the objectives and goals to be attained and their roles with respect to the programs. As was pointed out above, the planning agency can give the residents this information by means of personal interviews.

However, effective and widespread interest and support depend upon two other factors: (1) the identification and eradication of

hostility to the programs; and 2) the initiation of active citizen participation.

Identifying and Eradicating Hostility

In many instances city planning programs have experienced opposition and hostility from the people affected or, in some cases, from the entire community. Hostility has arisen to comprehensive plans, zoning ordinances and urban renewal plans. In many cases, this reaction has been due to a lack of information or to some misunderstanding about the program.

In conducting the personal interviews, the interviewers will be able to determine the respondents' attitudes toward the planning programs involved. If the reaction is hostile, the interviewer can then probe to determine the reasons for this hostility. If it is due to a lack of information or to a misunderstanding, the interviewer can carefully explain the program to the respondents. He can answer questions and can do much toward remedying misunderstandings. In this manner, the personal interview can play an important role in reducing hostility to planning programs.

Initiating Active Citizen Participation

Much has been said about the necessity of actively involving citizens in the city planning process. However, few concrete illustrations have been offered to demonstrate how this could be done. The personal interview technique offers an opportunity to secure active citizen participation.

The respondents in a personal interview become, through the interview process itself, active participants. Of course, their participation need not be limited to the interview; they may take part in other phases of the planning programs also. But even if they do not do so, the planning agency can be assured that some degree of citizen participation has been initiated when the personal interviews are conducted.

Appropriate Situations for Such Use of Personal Interviews

There are several different situations in which the personal interview would be particularly valuable to the planning agency as a technique for disseminating information and stimulating interest and support. These situations include those in which mass media methods of communication are inefficient or ineffective, situations in which new or complicated programs are to be presented to the community and those in which personal information is involved.

When Mass Media Communication Methods are Inefficient or Ineffective

Mass media communication techniques used by the planning agency include radio and television coverage, newspaper articles and editorials, and printed planning reports. By use of such methods, a large number of people can be reached within a short period of time and with a minimum of expense.

At the same time, however, planners realize that many citizens are not reached--and cannot be reached--through such techniques. In some cases, these people are those who will be most directly affected by the planning programs. Their interest and understanding of the

programs will be vital to success; it is essential to communicate with them. In situations such as these, the personal interview approach may prove to be valuable.

With Culturally Deprived People. One situation in which mass media methods are ineffective is when the audience is composed of illiterate or underprivileged people. If the people are illiterate, they will be unable to read the newspaper coverage of planning programs or planning reports. If they are also economically underprivileged, they may not possess a radio or television set and would be unable to receive information by these means.

Because large numbers of the people who are residents of slum clearance areas are illiterate and economically underprivileged, traditional mass media communication techniques will be of limited use. The personal interview may be the only feasible method of communicating with these people.

With Uninterested or Indifferent People. A second situation in which mass media communication methods are ineffective is in communicating with people who are uninterested or are indifferent to civic affairs. These are the people who would not normally read newspaper accounts of planning programs nor watch or listen to radio and television coverage of them. Thus, while these people have access to mass media coverage and are capable of understanding the communications, the mass media techniques are ineffective due to apathy.

It is difficult to estimate the number of people who fall into this category. Some sources claim that the typical resident of a city is uninterested in civic affairs and is indifferent toward the local

government. (39) Regardless of the actual percentage, there can be little doubt that the number is large.

In such situations, personal interviews could prove much more effective than mass media methods in communicating.

With Groups of Diverse Educational Levels. Another situation in which mass media methods are often inefficient is that of communicating with specific groups of people who have diverse educational levels. For example, the agency may want to give information to segments of the population which are known to have drastically different social and economic backgrounds and thus--in all probability--drastically different educational backgrounds. If mass media are used, the communication would have to be directed toward a "common ground" among the groups in an attempt to appeal to them simultaneously. In the process, much of the value of the communication could be lost.

The personal interview offers the planning agency an opportunity to direct the communication to each individual. The context and the language of the individual appeals can be varied as necessary according to each individual's educational level. In this manner, the total value and the appeal of the information could be retained.

When New or Complicated Programs are Presented

It is often necessary to present to the community new or complicated programs. For example, to some communities that are considering urban renewal for the first time, the procedures appear both new and complex.

The personal interview would be a valuable technique for the planning agency to use in introducing these programs to the community.

Since the respondent is free to ask questions of the interviewer, the program can be explained fully. The personal approach could be used in conjunction with standard methods, such as newspaper, radio and television coverage, and--depending upon the program--speaking engagements with civic clubs or group meetings in the area involved.

When Personal Information is Involved

In some instances the information which the planning agency wants to communicate may be of a personal nature. This would be the case when the information concerned relocation phases of urban renewal or dealt with neighborhood racial transition. For such information, mass media communication methods are not appropriate.

The personal interview offers a valuable alternative because it is a private conversation between interviewer and respondent.

Limitations on the Use of the Personal Interview to Inform Citizens and Secure Their Support

Limitations on using the personal interview to inform urban residents about city planning programs and to stimulate their interest and support are discussed below.

Cost

One problem is that of cost. The budget which the planning agency can allocate to the interviews is limited and costs are frequently high. Since it is necessary for an interviewer to meet and spend time with each respondent, the wages of the interviewers and transportation costs are major cost items. If these are high, the costs of interviewing large portions of a metropolitan population

would be prohibitive.

One method of reducing the costs of the interviews is by limiting the number of respondents. However, such a move could prove to be a serious problem for the planning agency. For example, if a planning program concerning the entire metropolitan area were undertaken, it would be important to inform people throughout the community. However, if the number of respondents were severely limited--for budgetary purposes--only a relatively few people could be reached through personal interviews. The fact that only a small percentage of the people who needed to be contacted actually were reached might jeopardize the value of using the personal interviews.

Possible Unreliability of Respondents

An additional problem for the planning agency may arise when the respondents are depended upon to transmit pertinent information to other people. There is the possibility that they may fail to do so. This possibility is an inherent danger in choosing people to relay information unless they are accustomed to doing so and their friends and neighbors expect to receive information from them. (40)

Respondents' Selectivity in Transmitting Information

A related problem is the possibility that if the information is transmitted to other people by the interview respondents, it may be incorrect or distorted. An error or distortion may be due to three possible causes: (1) an initial misinterpretation of the material by the respondent during the interview which the interviewer did not discover; (2) the respondents' selective retention of the material--people retain some facts better than others and may transmit distorted

versions of the information presented to them unintentionally and unconsciously; or (3) in some cases, deliberate distortion.

Timing

Another problem is that of timing. It is difficult to communicate with all the respondents at one time or within a relatively short period of time. In this respect, the personal interview method is different from the mass media communication techniques which allow information to be released to a wide audience simultaneously.

Timing may become a problem in those situations in which accepted "leaders" in an area are not the first to receive the information. In such cases, these "leaders" may feel undermined, indignant or insulted. Unnecessary opposition and hostility may arise. As a result, the planning program--about which information was being disseminated--may suffer.

Summary

The planning agency can utilize the personal interview as a technique for disseminating information to urban residents and for stimulating their interest and support. In the personal interviews, the respondents can be given a variety of information, including the reasons for a planning study, the objectives and goals and the role which the respondents will be expected to play, plus any special information. The interviews can be used to identify feelings of hostility and opposition and do much to eradicate them. Furthermore, as respondents in the personal interviews, the citizens would be taking an active part in the planning process.

Personal interviews could be most appropriately used in those

situations in which mass media communication methods are ineffective or inefficient. They may be used also when new or complicated programs are to be presented or when personal information is involved.

There are limitations on the use of the personal interview to disseminate information and stimulate citizen interest and support. For example, costs may be high and the planning agency may be forced to severely limit the number of respondents in order to reduce expenses. Such a move could limit the value of the personal interview approach. There is the problem of unreliability of the respondents in transmitting information to other people and the accompanying danger that if the information is transmitted, it may be distorted. An additional problem is timing, involving the necessity of informing "leaders" in an area first to avoid unnecessary antagonism.

CHAPTER IV

A GUIDE FOR PLANNING AGENCIES IN USING PERSONAL INTERVIEWS

The purpose of this chapter is to provide a guide for planning agencies in using personal interviews. This guide is in the form of steps to be taken in planning and conducting the interview. For additional technical information, the reader is referred to Surveys, Polls and Samples: Practical Procedures by Mildred Bernice Parten (New York: Harper and Brothers 1950), available from public and university libraries.

Review of Upcoming Planning Programs

First, the planning agency should review upcoming planning programs. In this review, the planning director should identify: (1) those programs which will require information that should be obtained through personal interviews; and (2) those programs which would benefit from the agency's using interviews to disseminate information and to encourage citizen interest and support.

Choice of Who Should Conduct the Interviewing

Once the needs for personal interviews have been identified, the next step is to decide who should conduct them. Basically the planning director has two choices: (1) the planning agency may assume the task; or (2) a competent, professional research firm may be hired. Each alternative has advantages and disadvantages. The major factors to be con-

sidered are discussed on the following pages.

The Planning Agency

There are three major advantages of the planning agency assuming the task of conducting the personal interviews: (1) better understanding of the data; (2) increased flexibility; and (3) the psychological value of public agency identification.

Better Understanding of the Data. It is important to obtain background information about the respondents in order to better understand their replies to the interviewer's questions. In this respect, the interviewers themselves are a valuable source. As they conduct the interviews, they will learn much that is useful about the respondents: the general physical conditions of the area where they live; the evidences of poverty or wealth; the atmosphere of friendliness or suspicion; as well as other physical and social details.

When the planning agency is conducting the interviews, it is in a good position to obtain much of this information. Its interviewing staff is readily available for consultation at any time and serves as a direct link of communication between the agency and the respondents. Thus, by seeking the interviewers' impressions of the respondents and the area in which they live, the planning agency can gain a better understanding of the data yielded by the interviews.

Increased Flexibility. A second major benefit of having the planning agency conduct the interviews is increased flexibility. When the first few interviews are completed, the planning agency may discover that some needed information has not been obtained--through no fault of the interviewers but due to an inadequacy of the interview

schedule. The schedule can be adjusted immediately so that the information can be obtained in the remaining interviews. This degree of flexibility might not be available to the planning agency if a research firm were conducting the interviews under a signed contract.

Psychological Value of Public Agency Identification. A third advantage that can be realized by the planning agency when it conducts the interviews is a psychological one--the authority and personal interest reflected when a public agency is directly involved in the interviewing. Some measure of authority is bestowed upon the interviewer when he is directly identified with a public agency. This identification could encourage an initially reluctant respondent to freely respond to his questions. In addition, when the interviewers are employees of the planning agency, it reflects a direct personal interest of the public agency in the respondents and can contribute greatly to the success of the project.

A Professional Research Firm

Many agencies that use personal interviews hire professional research firms to conduct them. The several advantages in doing so are discussed below.

Firm's Specialized Knowledge and Experience. Successful conduct of personal interviews requires specialized knowledge and skills, as well as practical experience in interview research. Generally, planning agencies will lack these requirements. For this reason alone, hiring a competent research firm to conduct the interviews is often a wise decision. The members of the firm will have the knowledge and experience necessary to insure a high quality of work and an efficient

execution of the interviews.

Availability of Trained Staff. A closely related advantage is the availability of the trained staff of the research firm. These firms already have available to them qualified interviewing and supervisory personnel; the planning agency will be freed from the task of recruiting, hiring, and training a staff. It can avoid taking planning staff personnel from their work and assigning them to the interview project. Thus, the availability of the research firm's staff may be the single greatest advantage the firm can offer to the planning agency.

Cost Savings. Due to the specialized knowledge of the research firm's staff and its experience in the conduct of interviews, significant cost savings are frequently possible. This will be particularly true when interviewing is not a continuing part of the planning agency's program. In such a case, it would usually not be economical for the planning agency to conduct the interviews itself.

Anonymity. Situations may arise in which the planning agency prefers not to become directly involved with the respondents chosen for the interviews. In these cases, use of a professional research firm is the logical choice. The firm itself would be interposed between the respondents and the planning agency. Though the needed information would be collected, the planning agency would not be directly involved with the respondents.

Role of the Planning Agency When it Conducts the Interviews

When the planning agency conducts the personal interviews, it is

responsible for all phases of the interviewing. The steps outlined below are those which a planning agency must face when a fairly extensive or continuing interviewing program is to be undertaken.

Securing Needed Resources

Before the planning agency can undertake the interviewing, it must obtain: the necessary financing; an interview project director; a supporting staff; office space, equipment and transportation; and an interviewing staff. Although the financing is actually the first resource to be obtained, discussion of it is postponed until last because the need for the other resources must be determined before estimates of financing can be developed.

Interview Project Director. The interview project director is responsible for organizing and supervising the conduct of the interviews. He will guide the development of the interview schedule and direct the selection of the respondents. In addition, he usually hires and trains the interviewing staff. (41) The interview project director also supervises the interviewing and reviews the completed interviews to check for any mistakes or deficiencies. Once the interviewing is completed, the director is responsible for analysis of the completed schedules.

The interview project director needs a variety of skills besides competence in interviewing. For example, he needs considerable skill in developing a valid and reliable interview schedule. The director must also be competent in sampling procedures because frequently a sample of respondents must be chosen from a larger population. When this is the case, the sample must be carefully selected if validity and

reliability are to be maintained. The director must also be competent in analytical techniques. If completed poll interviews are to be analyzed, statistical analysis techniques will be used. If open-end or depth interviews are to be analyzed, content analysis must be used. (This is a highly skilled technique and requires special training and experience.)

The person hired as interview project director should be well qualified for the position through previous training and experience. As a rule, he should have a college education in the social sciences, since it is in these fields that personal interview studies related to the interests of city planning are most often conducted. In general, interview project directors will have received post graduate training, with emphasis upon research methodology, and will have gained experience in interview research while in undergraduate or graduate school and after leaving the university.

Although there is the possibility that the planning agency has a qualified person already on its staff, in all likelihood a qualified interview project director must be recruited. The agency has two alternatives: either (1) to hire a director to serve full-time for the duration of the interview project; or (2) to assign a staff member to be responsible for the interviews and contract with a qualified person to serve as a consultant on a part-time basis.

Each arrangement has advantages. Having a director full time throughout the interview project would free the regular staff of additional duties and would insure continual supervision. However, having a regular staff member in charge, assisted by a qualified con-

sultant might be less expensive.

A member of the social science department faculty of a local university might reasonably be selected as the interview project director or as a part-time consultant. When faculty members themselves are not available for employment, they usually are able to recommend a qualified person for the position. In addition, the planning director may find it helpful to consult public and private employment agencies, employee counselors, public relations specialists and social service agencies, which may be able to furnish the names of qualified personnel.

Supporting Staff. The interview project director is usually assisted by supporting staff members. They are responsible for such supplementary operations as writing letters, printing interview schedules and making statistical computations. As a minimum, the staff consists of a secretary and a statistical clerk. In larger studies, one or two research associates who assist the project director would also be included.

Since the research associates would be expected to assist the interview project director in many of his duties or perform many of them for him, people placed in these positions should have some degree of the skills required of the director. Included among desirable skills for them would be a knowledge of sampling procedures, experience in coding and tabulating data and an understanding of the techniques of statistical analysis.

The planning director may want to fill the positions of secretary and statistical clerk with people from the agency's regular staff. The research associates will probably have to be recruited from the same

personnel sources that were used in recruiting the interview project director.

Interviewing Staff. The next resource to be obtained is an interviewing staff. (See Chapter II for interviewer qualifications.)

Interviewers may be recruited from public and private employment agencies; employment bureaus connected with universities, business or vocational schools; employee counselors; public relations specialists; and social service agencies. The Bureau of the Census can furnish the names of the Census enumerators (interviewers) that were used in the preceding decennial census. The social science departments of colleges and universities may be able to furnish names of qualified undergraduate or graduate students. The local school superintendent or elementary and secondary school principals may furnish the names of public school teachers who could be employed on a part-time basis.

An estimate of the number of interviewers needed can be derived by evaluating the total number of interviews needed, the approximate number of interviews that can be completed per day, and the total time allotted for the interviewing phase of the project. (The planning director should use caution, however, to avoid overestimating the number of interviews that can be completed in a day, because the time for travel, locating respondents, opening and closing the interviews, call backs and reviewing interview notes must be deducted from the time available for interviewing.) By multiplying the number of interviews that can be completed per day and the number of days allotted to the interviewing, the planning director can estimate the number of interviews that one interviewer should complete during the project. Then by

dividing this estimate into the total number of interviews needed, the planning director can arrive at an estimate of the number of interviewers needed.

The planning director should determine the required wage rate for the interviewers. This rate will depend upon the type of interviews to be used and the skills required of the interviewers. For poll interviewers, an hourly wage rate of \$1.50 to \$3.00 is normal. Determining the required hourly wage rates for open-end and depth interviewers is more difficult. Depending upon the complexity of the interview, the hourly wage rate for qualified open-end interviewers could vary from \$3.00 to \$10.00. Qualified depth interviewers earn more, from \$10.00 to \$15.00 per hour or higher. (Because of the relatively high hourly wage rates for the interviewers, depth interviews are usually conducted with a limited number of respondents.)

Office Space, Equipment and Transportation. The planning director should determine the amount of office space that will be needed for preparation, storage and tabulation of interview schedules. Also he should decide what equipment will be needed, such as typewriters, mimeograph machine and calculating machines, and make sure that needed equipment is available.

Financing. Once estimates have been made of the costs of the undertaking, the planning director should secure the funds necessary for financing the interview project. The major source of funds will be, of course, the regular planning budget. The planning director should estimate the amount that will be available from this fund and reserve it.

In addition, supplementary funds from the Housing and Home Finance Agency may be obtained for certain types of planning work. The planning director should also consider the possibility of obtaining financial support from other agencies or groups that need the information to be collected in the interviews. Such funds are generally in the form of a grant under the terms of section 701 (urban planning grants) of the Housing Act of 1954, as amended. The planning director should consult the nearest regional office of the Housing and Home Finance Agency to discuss application for these funds.

Formulating the Interview Schedule

The next step is the formulation of the interview schedule. The objectives of the planning study and the information needed should be carefully reviewed. A type of personal interview--or a combination of types--should be chosen as the most appropriate. (For a review of the types available, and the considerations underlying each, Chapter II of this thesis should be consulted.) Once the appropriate interview has been chosen, questions should be formulated--or an outline if the depth interview is to be used--and interview schedule forms should be printed.

Training the Interviewing Staff

After the interviewing staff has been hired, a short training program is desirable. This program usually consists of three meetings. At the first, the interviewers are given a brief orientation as to the objectives of the study and the principles and techniques of interviewing that are to be used. Also, they can be given information on any special ethnic and social factors characteristic of the area in

which they will be working. At the second meeting, the interview schedule is studied in detail, and demonstration interviews are presented. At the third meeting, the interviewers practice conducting the interviews and receive any necessary comments, criticism or additional information. (42)

Pre-Testing the Interview Schedule

After the interview schedule is formulated, it should be pre-tested. The primary purpose of this pre-test is to discover any weaknesses in the schedule. If any are discovered, corrections can be made before the actual interviewing begins.

The pre-test is carried out on a separate "pre-test sample." This sample consists of a limited number of respondents who ideally represent a cross-section of the respondents who will be involved when the actual interviewing is carried out.

Choosing the Respondents

Once the pre-test has been completed, the respondents for the actual interviewing should be chosen. If there are only a limited number of potential respondents, all of them can be interviewed. However, if the number of potential respondents is large, a sample should be drawn for the interviews. There are many types of samples, and the interview project director, interviewing consultant, or other qualified person, should suggest the most appropriate one.

Executing the Interviews

Once the respondents have been selected, the interviewing can begin. The interview project director and the planning director should

review the interviews as they are completed to be sure that the desired information is being obtained. If there are significant errors or deficiencies, additional interviews with the respondents involved will be required and appropriate changes should be made in the remainder of the interviews.

In addition, the project director may want to make special "field checks" as an additional guarantee of the accuracy of the data being collected. Also, he may hold special meetings with the interviewers to solve any special problems which have arisen.

Analyzing and Reporting the Results

As the interviews are completed and are judged satisfactory, the results should be tabulated in a form appropriate for analysis. The analysis of the data need not wait until all the interviews are completed.

After analysis, a report should be written summarizing the results of the interviews. The report should be more than merely an inventory of the data collected. It should set forth conclusions which are significant from the viewpoint of the planning agency.

Role of the Planning Agency

When a Research Firm Conducts the Interviews

When the planning agency decides to use a research firm in conducting personal interviews, the work that it must assume is greatly reduced. Essentially, there are only three major tasks facing the planning agency: (1) hiring the research firm; (2) collaborating with the firm at key points in the interviewing project; and (3) carefully

reviewing the results of the interviewing with the research firm.

Hiring the Research Firm

There are several sources which can be consulted for the names of qualified research firms. First, the planning director should ask planning agencies, social service agencies and other firms about their experience with interview research firms. Secondly, if there is a local college or university, the planning director should consult both the social science department and the department of marketing about such firms.

For a complete listing of research firms, the planning director should consult Bradford's Directory of Marketing Research Agencies in the United States and the World (Middleburg, Virginia: Bradford's Directory of Marketing Research Agencies, Tenth Edition, 1963-1964). Examples of firms listed there include:

A. C. Nielsen Company
2101 W. Howard Street
Chicago 45, Illinois

National Opinion Research Center
5720 South Woodlawn Avenue
Chicago 37, Illinois

The Gallup Organization, Inc.
53 Bank Street
Princeton, New Jersey

In addition, the planning director may wish to consult a professional association to which many research firms belong--the American Marketing Association (230 North Michigan Avenue, Chicago, Illinois). It will furnish a membership roster to the planning agency upon request. The roster--entitled A Geographic Listing of Marketing Research Consultants and Agencies--can also be found in many univer-

sity and public libraries.

A limited number of research firms should be chosen for preliminary consideration. The planning director should write to each of them, describing the project to be undertaken. He should request an interview with representatives of each of the firms. In the interview, the planning director should ask about the firm's personnel, particularly the person or persons who would be available from the respective firms for consultation and supervision during the course of the interview project. He should also inquire about the firms' experience and fees. (These firms do not have rigid "price lists" for different interviews which would apply to any interview project. Rather they prefer to make an estimate for the specific project after they have evaluated the interviewing costs, data processing costs and executive time that will be involved.)

Collaborating with the Firm

Of course, once the research firm has been hired, the planning agency should maintain close communication with the firm throughout the interviewing process to insure that the work of the firm and the results of the interviews are satisfactory. Likewise, the planning agency and the research firm should collaborate on the key phases of the project: the formulation of the interview schedule; the choosing of respondents; and review of completed interviews.

The interview schedule represents a translation of the goals of the planning project into specific questions. Joint effort by the planning agency and the research firm in the formulation of the interview schedule should insure that all the information needed by the planning

agency will be elicited in the interviews. Collaboration during the choosing of respondents will give the research firm the benefit of the planning agency's knowledge of the urban area; efficient transportation routes can be mapped and the research firm can prepare the interviewing staff for any unusual conditions they might face in attempting to locate respondents and interview them. Finally, collaboration on the review of the interview schedules as they are completed will serve as a check on whether all the data needed are actually being obtained.

Reviewing the Completed Project

Once the data have been collected and analyzed, the planning agency and the research firm should carefully review together the entire project. All facets of the project should be discussed, and any uncertainties or questions should be answered. Moreover, the research firm can elaborate upon any problems it faced or any additional points of inquiry which came to its attention while the interviews were being conducted.

Summary

The planning agency should review upcoming planning programs to determine those which will benefit from the use of personal interviews. Once the programs have been identified, the planning agency should decide who is going to conduct the interviews: the agency itself or a competent, professional research firm. By conducting the interviews itself, the planning agency can often obtain a better understanding of the data that are collected, have more flexibility in carrying out the interview project and can capitalize on the value of public agency

identification with the interviews.

On the other hand, when a professional research firm conducts the interviews, the planning agency has the benefit of the firm's specialized knowledge and experience and has available to it the firm's trained staff. The research firm may be able to effect cost savings. Also, the research firm can offer the planning agency anonymity when it is desired.

If the planning agency conducts the interviews itself, it must assume the responsibility for the entire project. This will include: securing the needed resources (an interview project director; a supporting staff; an interviewing staff; office space, equipment and transportation; and the necessary financing); formulating the interview schedule; pre-testing the schedule; choosing the respondents; executing the interviews; and analyzing and reporting the results.

When a professional research firm conducts the interviews, the work that the planning agency must assume is greatly reduced. Primarily the agency will be responsible for hiring the firm, collaborating on key phases of the project (such as formulating the interview schedule; choosing the respondents and reviewing completed interviews) and reviewing the completed project to clear up any uncertainties and to allow the firm to elaborate upon any additional points of inquiry which came to its attention during the interviewing.

The full value of the personal interviews can be realized only when they are incorporated into the actual planning process. For example, the interviews can provide a stimulus for the planning agency to re-evaluate planning programs already underway. The interviews

should provide some index of the knowledge and acceptance of these programs by the general public. Also, they can provide some means for judging the wisdom of specific measures being carried out as part of the programs.

In addition, the interviews should be useful in judging the efficacy of the new or contemplated programs. Through the interviews, needs of urban residents can be discovered. Forthcoming planning programs can then be evaluated in terms of those needs.

More importantly, the personal interviews form a link of communication between the planning agency and urban residents. Both share in this communication; each learns from the other. More than anything, it is the establishment of communication between the citizen and the public agency which can contribute to a more effective planning program.

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